Director's Report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission
APRIL 11-12, 2008
"A Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife"

We serve Washington's citizens by protecting, restoring and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities.

Fish and Wildlife Goal:
Achieve healthy, diverse and sustainable fish and wildlife populations and their supporting habitats

Petition to NOAA Regarding Five Species of Rockfish to be listed as Endangered –

NOAA Fisheries released a media notice the first week of April stating that it has accepted a petition to list five species of rockfish occurring in Puget Sound under the terms of the Endangered Species Act. These species are yelloweye, canary, bocaccio, greenstriped, and redstripe rockfishes. The petition identifies declines in these species in the recreational catch and other sensitive life history characteristics that make them vulnerable to over-fishing.

Department evaluations of fishery data and survey information indicates that these are minor species among the rockfishes in Puget Sound and have always been uncommon in recreational catches. Yelloweye, canary, and bocaccio rockfishes have become more rare in recreational catches between the 1980s and 1990s. Yelloweye and canary rockfishes are considered overfished on the coast of Washington and are considered depleted in Puget Sound. Greenstriped and redstriped rockfishes appear to be stable or increasing in frequency during Department bottom trawl surveys and are characterized as healthy. Bocaccio is considered to be in a Precautionary stock condition.

The Department has already taken direct actions to reduce the threat of fishing to these typically deepwater rockfishes. Since 2002, the Department has prohibited the harvest of yelloweye and canary rockfishes in Puget Sound. Since 2000, the Department has limited the daily recreational take of rockfish to only one fish per day and later prohibited spear fishing for rockfish. All these measures, as well as commercial fishery restrictions, have removed directed fisheries on rockfish.

Pinto Abalone Restoration Studies –

The Department Central Shellfish Dive Team, in collaboration with the University of Washington, collected 68-abalone from the Long Island area of the San Juan Archipelago. Collection of these animals is necessary for the implementation of two separate species restoration projects, funded under a NOAA Species of Concern Grant and a SeaDoc Society Grant. The first of these projects will investigate the genetics and morphology of abalone within the vicinity of Long Island; an area identified in earlier work as containing a unique abalone form. The second project is to test the feasibility and success of artificial aggregation of adult Pinto abalone as a species restoration strategy for stimulating localized

recruitment. All abalone collected for this project were tagged, weighed, measured (shell length, shell width, shell height) and photographed. Additionally, each abalone was examined to determine sex and genetics samples were obtained. In the following weeks, the team will identify and establish aggregation study sites using a subset of the animals collected. Individuals not used in the study will be returned to their original collection location.

Comments on Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wind Power SEPA Actions –

In three separate actions, DNR is proposing to lease all or part of 48 non-contiguous sections totaling 20,845 acres in Columbia, Garfield and Walla Walla counties for wind power development. DNR stated that the proposed action is the act of leasing and not the actual development of the land. Because wind power is known to have adverse environmental effects, we recommended that DNR:

1) produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), or

2) remove sensitive parcels from further consideration for lease, or both; or

3) reinitiate this process after the counties have completed their planning updates; or

4) only consider leasing specific lands once approached by the wind industry.

Hydrokinetic Power Legislation -

House and Senate versions of this bill were merged under Senate Bill 6111, and this passed both houses unanimously. This legislation establishes tax breaks for hydrokinetic (wave and tidal) power developers, and establishes a workgroup to streamline permitting and develop programmatic objectives to encourage research and demonstrations of wave and tidal energy development, and promote Washington as the optimal location for the development and deployment of wave and tidal energy technologies. The Department will be required to participate in a two-year stakeholder process.

Review of DOE's Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) for Hanford -

Olympia and regional staff are reviewing Department of Energy's CLUP for the Hanford nuclear research facilities to determine whether a new EIS, or a supplement to the existing EIS, should be prepared. The CLUP prescribes land use planning goals, policies, and procedures for directing future land uses at the 500+ square mile site for the next 50 years. Over 44 fish species, 178 bird species (including 26 raptor species), 40 mammal species, and 15 amphibian and reptile species potentially could be affected. The proposed actions have the ability to affect one of the last remaining significant mainstream spawning habitats for the Upper Columbia River summer/fall-run chinook salmon and white sturgeon, as well as potentially affect relatively undisturbed shrub-steppe habitats.

Beebe Springs Channel Finally Receives Full Flow, New Spawning Gravel & Large Woody Debris –

Phase 1 of the Beebe Springs Salmon & Steelhead Habitat Enhancement project has been completed with connection of the newly created stream system to its parent spring system through a new "roughened channel," thus allowing water to finally flow unhindered into the new salmonid stream system for the first time in over a year. The project is on Department land adjacent to the Department's Chelan Hatchery. The channel was replenished with new salmonid spawning gravel, pools were deepened, riffles were re-built and bouldered, and new large woody debris was added to provide escape cover for both juvenile and adult salmonids expected to enter the new stream system. The stream was designed for both salmonid spawning (salmon and steelhead) and rearing and should over time provide excellent spawning habitat for summer steelhead, coho salmon, and limited numbers of spring and summer chinook, as well as superb rearing habitat for all local and anadromous salmonids found within this reach of the upper mid-Columbia River system.

Wooten Wildlife Area Revegetation –

The planting of over half a million trees and shrubs has continued on areas burnt in the 2005 School Fire. In addition to the state law requirement to replant trees after a timber salvage operation, the Department has chosen to plant a number of critical shrubs. Wildlife staff is coordinating the work crews consisting of two planting teams and inspectors, totaling about 30 people. Another 100,000 trees and shrubs were planted recently, bringing the total up to approximately 200,000 plants in the ground.

WildWatchCams –

Watchable Wildlife staff are involved in discussions with Charlie Hillard, Director of Kids In the Nest, a youth education nonprofit society that can be viewed at http://www.kidsinthenest.com/index.php. The society's purpose is to educate children and increase the awareness of nature, habitat issues affecting the environment, ecosystem, and climate changes with an emphasis on higher learning. The society contacted Watchable Wildlife staff to make an offer that is hard to refuse. Kids In the Nest is looking for a selection of international streaming wildlife cams and education partners to help meet its goals. It has offered to pay the Department for special equipment and contractor time to convert existing Department WildWatch cams to a streaming mode. The streaming images would be served out of a server company in Los Angeles (supported by Kids In the Nest) and will also be made available on our Department website.

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Stabilization Planting –

Department staff and ten volunteers began planting the area where three wood structures were built in December to establish woody vegetation as a long-term erosion control measure along the Toutle River. An estimated 4 to 5,000 willow and cottonwood cuttings and 100 rooted sitka alder were planted in a stretch of about 1/4 mile in one day. Within the following week, Wildlife Area employees planted an additional 550 rooted trees and shrubs, including Pacific ninebark, redosier dogwood, black cottonwood, sitka spruce, noble fir,

Douglas fir, and grand fir. The cottonwood, spruce, and fir are all being placed in four-foot high plastic tree shelters and 12-inch diameter wire tubes anchored with rebar stakes to protect them from elk browsing and dehydration.

Public Conduct WAC Communication and Implementation –

The Lands Division Conservation Planner and Real Estate Manager have been working on the implementation of a communication plan designed to inform the public about the new public conduct rules. A single page Washington Administrative Code (WAC) information document was developed by the Department's Conservation Planner and will serve as an aid to help inform the public on the new public conduct rules on Department land. This sheet will be included in both the hunting and fishing pamphlets.

WDFW/Washington Department of Natural Resources Land Exchange Coordination Meeting –

The Lands Division Manager and Conservation Planners met with representatives from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Recreation and Conservation Office, and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to discuss and set timelines for completing state and federal consultation requirements for the land exchange. Specific issues discussed included State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 7 and 106, and conversion considerations.

Title: White River Spring Chinook Captive Brood Program –

140,000 yearling White River spring chinook at the Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery are ready for release. White River spring chinook are reared at the Little White Salmon Hatchery with the intention of being transferred to the White River watershed in early spring for acclimation prior to release. Following a March 14 conference call of the Priest Rapids Hatchery Subcommittee, it was decided that this year's acclimation would take the form of direct plants into the lower White River beginning mid-March. The original goal was to place the juveniles in net pens in Lake Wenatchee (at the White River confluence) by the end of March for an early-to-mid May release. However, the double difficulties of permit deadlines (March 28 Substantial Development Permit appeal deadline) and ongoing public opposition to White River spring chinook supplementation left a direct plant as the only feasible option for acclimation this spring. This group of yearlings represents the largest brood year for release to date of the captive brood program; 2007 production was 75,000; prior to 2007, production was less than 3,000.

Title: Hanford Reach Fall Chinook –

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Hanford Reach Work Group (HRWG) was held in mid-March. The HRWG currently functions as the forum for addressing actions related to implementation of the Fall Chinook Protection Program contained in the Priest Rapids Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement (PRSSA, 2005), of which the Hanford Reach Fall Chinook Protection Program Agreement (HRFCPP, 2004) is a part. At this meeting, as it had indicated earlier, Grant PUD proposed a study of daytime peaking operations during

the 2008 Hanford Reach fall chinook spawning period. Under the HRFCPP, Grant PUD is required to operate the Priest Rapids Project under Reverse Load Factoring (RLF) operations during the fall chinook spawning period, meaning peaking operations occur only during nighttime hours. Grant PUD proposed such a study in 2007, but the HRWG was not able to reach consensus on some components of the proposal and with additional, outside opposition, Grant withdrew it. Grant PUD will be providing a draft proposal within the next 4-6 weeks to HRWG members with the intention of trying to address concerns raised with the 2007 proposal. Over the next 3-4 months, the HRWG will work with Grant to develop an Alternative Operations proposal for 2008. The goal of daytime peaking operation studies is to evaluate the various effects of peaking daytime discharges on spawning fall chinook salmon in the Hanford Reach, such that the formation of high elevation spawning in the Hanford Reach is minimized.

Title: Wanapum Dam Top Spill Juvenile Bypass –

Construction of the $35M Wanapum Dam Future Unit Fish Bypass has been completed and will be operational for the 2008 spill season beginning mid-April. Design, construction, and evaluation of the Wanapum Dam juvenile fish bypass was required by NOAA's 2004 Priest Rapids Project Biological Opinion (BiOp) and is included as a condition in the NOAA's 2008 Priest Rapids BiOp issued for a new 50-year project license which is expected to be issued this spring. Design and testing of a prototype topspill juvenile fish bypass began at Priest Rapids Dam in 2006. The Priest Rapids Dam topspill is also a BiOp requirement. Design completion and construction timelines are determined through consultation with the Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee.

Public Goal:

Ensure sustainable fish and wildlife opportunities for social and economic benefit

Clam and Oyster Enhancement –

Staff planted hatchery-reared juvenile clam and oyster "seed" at three public beaches this week. At Sequim Bay State Park, staff planted 100 bags of clutched Pacific oyster seed and 200,000 Manila clam seed. With survival to legal size averaging 25%, this seeding is expected to provide 50,000 harvestable clams and 90,000 harvestable oysters in 2-3 years. Staff planted 200,000 Manila clam seed at Cline Spit County Park in Dungeness Bay. This should provide 50,000 harvestable clams in 2-3 years. At the Point Whitney Lagoon, staff planted 400,000 Manila clam seed, which should provide 100,000 harvestable clams in 2 years. Enhancement efforts in the Lagoon are specifically targeted to increasing the length of the sport season at this popular recreational harvest site. During this enhancement work, we also noticed highly visible evidence of sand lance spawning in Dungeness, Sequim and Bywater Bays.

Potlatch Clam and Oyster Enhancement –

Staff met with Skokomish Tribal biologists on the beach at Potlatch State Park to provide technical advice regarding Manila clam and Pacific oyster seeding opportunities on the Park and adjacent DNR tidelands. The Tribe plans to plant 1.2 million hatchery-reared Manila clam seed on the Park tidelands this spring. Because the tidelands are public property,

recreational harvesters will have full access to these clams once they reach legal size in two or three years. In 2006, the Skokomish Tribe and our agency shared the costs of planting one million Manila clam seed on the beach. During our site visit, the silt plume from the increased flows in the Skokomish River was very noticeable across Annas Bay, and it extended across the width of the Canal. There may be some negative effects on shellfish at Potlatch from increased deposition of fine sediments.

Funding Goal

Ensure effective use of current and future financial resources in order to meet the needs of Washington State's fish and wildlife resource for the benefit of the public

WDFW Successfully Competes for PSC-LOA Funding –

In response to the November 2007 Request for Proposals from the U.S. Chinook Technical Committee, personnel from the Fish Science Division submitted nine proposals for new funding, and two proposals as part of continuing projects. New funding proposals are competitive, but continuing project proposals are approved if progress reports have been submitted appropriately and the second year funding proposal is consistent with the original proposal. Both continuing project proposals and budgets, and seven of the nine new project proposals were accepted for FY08 funding.

Facility Condition Assessment Kick Off –

April 2, 2008 marked the kick off to Capital, Planning, and Facilities Management's Facility Condition Assessment. Meng Analysis and their sub consultants met with the Department's engineering staff at the Puyallup Hatchery to begin assessments for the facility's condition. This process will be repeated at other facilities with the purpose of developing a systematic approach to maintaining facility condition data of Department owned real property assets. With the use of technology and a systematic approach to renewing the condition assessment data, the Department will have essential information for developing a 10-year capital plan and prioritizing projects.

Competence Goal:

Implement processes that produce sound and professional decisions, cultivate public involvement and build public confidence and agency credibility

WSQA Application Development –

The Department is developing an application to the Washington State Quality Award (WSQA), a non-profit agency working with state agencies and other organizations to help fulfill policy requirements under RCW 43.17. We will be applying for what is called the "Lite Assessment" process with a primary focus on the Enforcement Program. The WSQA process helps agencies develop best management practices around leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, and workforce and internal processes. It will also help WDFW improve communications and serve as a tool for understanding and managing performance. WSQA also helps guide agency planning processes and opportunities for funding. The application is due to WSQA

on October 1, 2008. An assessment of our application will be conducted and volunteer WSQA examiners will issue a feedback report

Wildlife Conflict Committee –

The Wildlife Conflict Committee, a group of stakeholders and legislative staff working together to revise state policy and address wildlife-human conflict, has met for a second time. Policy direction as related to property damage was the main subject in the meeting. Issues related to the use of traps and the development of local wildlife conflict stakeholder groups will be discussed during future venues. The group's emphasis will be the revision of statutes in preparation for the 2009 legislative session.

Private Lands Access Communication –

The Upland Game Section Manager met with Region 1 Wildlife and Enforcement Program staff in Dayton and attended a Columbia County Commissioner meeting to discuss wildlife damage and private lands access issues. In addition to the Commissioners, approximately 30 members of the public, representing landowners and hunters, were in attendance. Staff provided information about the Department's private lands access programs (Feel Free to Hunt, Hunt by Written Permission, Register to Hunt, and the Landowner Hunting Permit program), Commission Policy C-6002 – Private Lands Access, game damage response and management, and the newly passed extension of the Pilot Cougar Hunting project (Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2438).

Public Opinion on Hunting –

The Game Division contracted with Responsive Management to determine hunter's and the general population's opinion on hunting and wildlife management in Washington. The study entailed a phone survey of Washington residents. The results of the survey have been received and are available online (http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/management/2009-2015).

Science Goal

Promote development and responsible use of sound and objective science to inform decision-making

WDFW Receives Investigation New Animal Drug Permit from US-FDA –

Cryptobia salmositica is a protozoan blood parasite that infects all five Pacific salmon species and rainbow trout. At WDFW's Sol Duc hatchery, losses of spring Chinook salmon adults due to Cryptobia have been 50-60% annually for two decades (10-15% mortality is considered acceptable). The disease causes the almost complete loss of the early- and mid-run females, which could alter genetic diversity and run timing. The hatchery collects three times as many adults as would normally be needed for egg collection purposes, reducing the fish available for sport and commercial harvest, because holding adult salmon requires several drip formalin treatments each week to control fungus infections, the disease increases the costs and environmental impact of the hatchery. Isometamidium chloride (IMC) was injected into Sol Duc spring Chinook adults in 2007 to control mortality due to Cryptobia.

The results are:

a. Enhanced survival to spawning in mid run treated females (95% cl)
b. No toxicity after 2 injections of 1 mg/kg or 1 injection of 2 mg/kg
c. Fry from injected fish show normal survival and development.

We have received from U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) an investigational new animal drug (INAD) permit so that eggs from injected females can be used in Sol Duc hatchery's production. FDA has given WDFW a waiver of all INAD fees ($50,000 annually). The drug manufacturer Merial will supply the drug as a gift. The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission fish pathology staff members reviewed the experimental protocol and comments were incorporated into the plan, which is endorsed by the Quileute Tribe. It is a combined effort of Fish Health, Hatcheries and Science Divisions with a special effort being made by staff members at Sol Duc Hatchery.